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Searching for a place to live

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Searching for a place to live

Succession and child career strategies of peasants and farmer households in rural Drenthe and Groningen in the first half of the nineteenth century

Work in progress

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Searching for a place to live

- Trying to understand how processes of social mobility work
- Meritocracy: do structural circumstances and social background or do individual capabilities determine social positions
- Looking at intergenerational social mobility of individuals in the context of a dynamic family process

Main question:

What were the consequences for farmer and peasant families and their members of the structural shortage of existing positions (niches) for the next generation?

- Future social chances children
- Continuation farm within family
- Career chances brothers and sisters of successor
- Alternative career chances
- Differences between coastal Groningen and inland Drenthe



Two cases (rural societies)

eastern Marne
(Groningen)
-> Coastal area

Oosterhesselen
(Drenthe)
-> Inland area

Characteristics

Groningen

- Agriculture completely market-oriented
- Sharp social division (numerous labourers and craftsmen)
- Mostly freeholders (*beklemming*)
- Relatively large farms outside the villages
- FARMER SOCIETY

Drenthe

- Underdeveloped money economy
- More egalitarian (even craftsmen were peasants)
- Many smallholder farmsteads (1-7 ha.)
- Farms concentrated in villages
- PEASANT SOCIETY

Table 4. Division of transfers of farms in the eastern Marne (Groningen) and Oosterhesselen (Drenthe), 1740-1860

	1740-1860 Groningen	1742-1860 Drenthe
Son (married)	15%	21%
Daughter (married)	8%	5%
Unmarried child or children	3%	n.a.
Other near relatives	7%	7%
Total relatives	33%	33%
Widow remarrying	13%	2%
Unrelated new farmers (sold)	43%	n.a.
Unrelated farmers (rented out)	3%	n.a.
Empty / labourers / disappear	8%	n.a.
Non-family	54%	61%
Unknown	-	4%
N	584	570

Table 5/6. Division of transfer of farms in the eastern Marne (Groningen), 1740-1860

eastern Marne	5-15 ha	15-30 ha	30-50 ha	50+ ha		Total
Son (married)	7%	8%	20%	23%		13%
Daughter (married)	7%	8%	9%	4%		7%
Unmarried child or children	1%	1%	3%	7%		2%
Other near relatives	7%	5%	5%	10%		6%
Total relatives	21%	22%	37%	43%		29%
Widow(er) remarrying	19%	24	27%	27%		24%
Non-family	60%	54%	36%	30%		47%
N	177	213	173	104		667
Oosterhesselen	1-7 ha	8-13 ha	14-18 ha	19+ ha	Unknown	Total
Sons	16%	28%	24%	27%	25%	21%
Daughters	3%	5%	5%	6%	13%	5%
Other relatives	3%	11%	3%	17%	0%	7%
Total relatives	22%	44%	32%	50%	28%	33%
Widow remarrying	2%	1%	0%	2%	13%	2%
Non-Family	70%	53%	62%	45%	50%	61%
Unknown	6%	2%	5%	3%	0%	4%
N	288	173	37	64	8	570

Table 7. Children of farmers living in the eastern Marne(Groningen) and Oosterhesselen (Drenthe) around 1807

	eastern Marne (Groningen)				Oosterhesselen (Drenthe)			
	male	%	female	%	male	%	female	%
Died before 18	106	34%	85	30%	51	20%	41	19%
Died unmarried 18-29	16	5%	8	3%	16	6%	6	3%
Died unmarried 30+	22	7%	4	1%	42	16%	13	6%
Married	169	54%	188	66	150	57%	158	72%
Unknown	7	-	3	-	13	-	15	-
Total children	320		288		274		235	
Average per farm	3.4		3.0		2.7		2.3	
‘survivors’ per farm	2.0		2.0		1.9		1.7	

Table 8. Successors of the inhabitants of the farms of 1807 in the eastern Marne (Groningen) and Oosterhesselen (Drenthe)

	eastern Marne (Groningen)	Oosterhesselen (Drenthe)
First son	17%	23%
Other son	16%	8%
Daughters	16%	5%
Other relatives	7%	4%
Strangers	44%	60%
N	95	103

Table 9. Average age at first marriage of children of farmers in the eastern Marne and peasants in Oosterhesselen (Drenthe) around 1807

	SONS				DAUGHTERS			
	Marne Farmers		O-hesselen peasants		Marne Farmers		O-hesselen peasants	
	Age	N	Age	N	Age	N	Age	N
Small	30.2	44	30.9	81	25.4	43	28.0	88
Medium	28.8	48	31.7	44	23.9	60	26.5	48
Large	28.2	48	36.7	6	25.3	49	28.6	5
Very large	27.0	29	36.2	19	23.0	35	25.3	17
Total	28.7	169	32.0	150	24.5	187	27.3	158

Table 10/ 11. Number of children and farm-size in 1807 of farmers living in eastern Marne (Groningen) and Oosterhesselen (Drenthe)

eastern Marne	5-15 ha	15-30 ha	30-50 ha	50+ ha
Total children	133	175	173	123
Number of farms	20	29	29	17
Average per farm	6.7	6.0	6.0	7.2
‘survivors’ per farm	4.6	4.0	3.7	4.1
‘married’ per farm	4.4	3.8	3.3	3.8
Oosterhesselen	1-7 ha	8-13 ha	14+ ha	
Total children	271	163	75	
Number of farms	59	28	16	
Average per farm	4.6	5.8	4.7	
‘survivors’ per farm	3.2	4.0	3.7	
‘married’ per farm	2.8	3.3	2.9	

Table 12/13. Occupation of married children of farmers around 1807 or their male partners some five years after marriage eastern Marne (Groningen) and Oosterhesselen (Drenthe)

eastern Marne	5 -15 ha		15-30 ha		30-50 ha		50+ ha	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Farmers	23	26%	45	41%	67	69%	43	67%
<i>[of whom uccessors]</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>14%</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>9%</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>17%</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>14%</i>
Labourers	38	44%	36	33%	10	10%	5	8%
‘Middle class’	26	30%	28	26%	20	21%	16	25%
Total	87		109		97		64	
Oosterhesselen	1-7 ha		8-13 ha		14+ ha			
Farmers	76	45%	48	52%	30	64%		
Labourers	42	25%	17	18%	5	11%		
‘Middle Class’	40	24%	13	14%	7	15%		
Unknown	11	7%	14	15%	5	11%		
Total	169		92		47			

Table 14/ 15. Occupation of married children or their partners about five year after marriage related to what happened with the parental farm in the eastern Marne (Groningen) and Oosterhesselen (Drenthe).

	To first son	To other son	To daughter	To relatives	Sold (Left)
eastern Marne					
Successor	38%	21%	26%	-	-
Other farmers	33%	57%	31%	71%	28%
Labourers	7%	6%	16%	6%	43%
‘Middle class’	21%	15%	28%	24%	30%
N (children)	42	71	58	17	169
Oosterhesselen					
Successor	26%	27%	42%	-	-
Other farmers	38%	32%	50%	55%	47%
Labourers	7%	18%	0%	9%	28%
‘Middle Class’	12%	18%	8%	18%	17%
Unknown	17%	5%	0%	18%	8%
N (children)	76	22	12	11	185

Table 16. Average age at first marriage of children of farmers in the eastern Marne (Groningen) and peasants in Oosterhesselen (Drenthe) around 1807 (occupation five year after marriage).

	SONS				DAUGHTERS			
	eastern Marne farmers		Oosterhesselen peasants		eastern Marne farmers		Oosterhesselen peasants	
	Age	N	Age	N	Age	N	Age	N
Labourer	28.0	47	27.9	37	24.2	42	27.2	27
‘Middle class’	29.7	30	31.6	25	24.4	59	28.3	35
Farmer	28.7	92	32.8	83	24.6	86	28.6	71
Unknown	-	-	-	5				25
Total	28.7	169	32.0	150	24.5	187	27.3	158

Table 17. Occupation of married children or their partners about five year after marriage related to the circumstances under which a farm was sold in easter Marne (Groningen)

	Move to other farm	Becoming middle class	Retired	Impoverished	Sold by heirs
Farmers	54%	37%	23%	10%	26%
Labourers	18%	32%	23%	66%	61%
‘Middle class’	28%	32%	53%	24%	13%
N (children)	39	19	30	58	23
N (farms)	8	6	6	12	6
Married per farm	4.9	3.2	5.0	4.8	3.8

Table 18. Occupational position of ‘surviving’ children of farmers in the eastern Marne (Groningen) and peasants in Oosterhesselen (Drenthe) around 1807

	eastern Marne (Groningen)	Oosterhesselen (Drenthe)
Succession of parents or parents-in-law (married)	25%	17%
Acquisition of farmstead in a different way (married)	21%	25%
‘Middle Class’ (married)	23%	17%
Labourers (married)	23%	18%
Unknown (married)	-	8%
Permanent celibates (aged 30 and older)	7%	15%
N	383	363

Concluding remarks

1. Parental position was far less important in household formation than often suggested. Family succession was in both cases not dominant, exception: richer farmers and freehold peasants.
2. Average marriage age of peasants in Drenthe was higher than that of farmers in Groningen. This and the more frequent celibacy lessened the shortage of farmsteads in Drenthe.
3. Reasons for non-family succession were: impoverishment, lack of capital of the heirs, childlessness, wish for a larger farm.
4. In Drenthe 'farm-hopping' among small leaseholders was common. In both Drenthe and Groningen transfer of farms to strangers was often linked to downward intergenerational social mobility, which seems often to be caused by downward intragenerational mobility of the parents.
5. In Drenthe a strong preference for succession of the oldest son than in Groningen, and the position of women (widows and daughters) was much weaker than in Groningen.
6. Further research: in depth analysis of family factors which might have influenced the chances on downward social mobility: - number of siblings; - position within the family; - remarrying of parents; - moment of death of parents; - migration behaviour.